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ABSTRACT

The teaching activities presented in this article focus on a bookmaking party, which gives children a format in which they can publish and share their activities in a formal way, provides them with books for recording their writing, and involves students, parents, and the community with children's writing. The paper describes the steps for assembling the materials and organizing the party, and contains a sample invitation and instructions for making the books. (EL)

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Feature Project--A Bookmaking Party

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FEATURE PROJECT

A Bookmaking Party

The incentive for working hard on a piece of original writing comes from the feeling of pride when someone wants to read what you've written. Bookmaking is one way that children of any age can publish and share their stories in a formal way.

A bookmaking party not only provides students with books for recording their writing, it gets students, parents, and the community involved with children's writing.

Enlist the aid of support staff, the P.T.A., and local businesses in gathering materials to make the blank books. You will need paper for the pages, self-adhesive paper such as Con-tact paper for covers, rubber cement, cardboard from empty cereal boxes or grocery cartons, and a sewing machine (although you can punch holes and stitch pages by hand).

Mail each parent a formal invitation to a "Parent Bookmaking Party." (A sample invitation can be found on page 11. Just fill in the date, time, and location, and photocopy the letter.) Since many of the parents in our school have small children at home, we invite them to work on bookmaking in the teachers' lounge while our students help care for younger siblings in our second-grade classroom. (Parents and teachers rotate into the classroom to provide adult supervision.)

Send a follow-up invitation a week later and call families the evening before the party to emphasize the importance of the event and to increase attendance. In preparation for the party, the students rehearse puppet shows designed to entertain their younger brothers and sisters and practice readings from *The Popcorn Book* by Tomie de Paola and the big book version of *The Gingerbread Man.* They also make popcorn and gingerbread cookies to serve to their visitors.

The excitement level is high the day of the party. Parents arrive and tour the second-grade classroom, leaving their small children with the class and taking babies with them to the teachers' lounge. Conversation flows easily as we snack and assemble the writing books, following the directions on page 12.

Several parents offer to take materials home to continue the project while others offer to return to help in the classroom. Although the party nets dozens of books, the benefits extend even further. The second-grade students are able to share their knowledge with younger children, and they know that their writing books have been prepared by parents who value their writing. Parents feel they are welcome in school and can contribute to their children's education.

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Dear

Our class is doing a lot of writing this year. I would like to publish the children's writings in books. These books would then become part of the classroom library, and the children would see how important their writing is.

I would like to ask for your help. To make the book project a success, I need to have many blank books made and ready for the children. I already have the materials, and they are ready to be put together. Would you be able to come to a "Bookmaking Party" to prepare the books? The books are not hard to make. We stitch paper down the center on a sewing machine, cut covers out of empty cereal boxes, and cover them with Con-tact paper. Our class can help watch your little ones while you are here. We will also prepare refreshments.

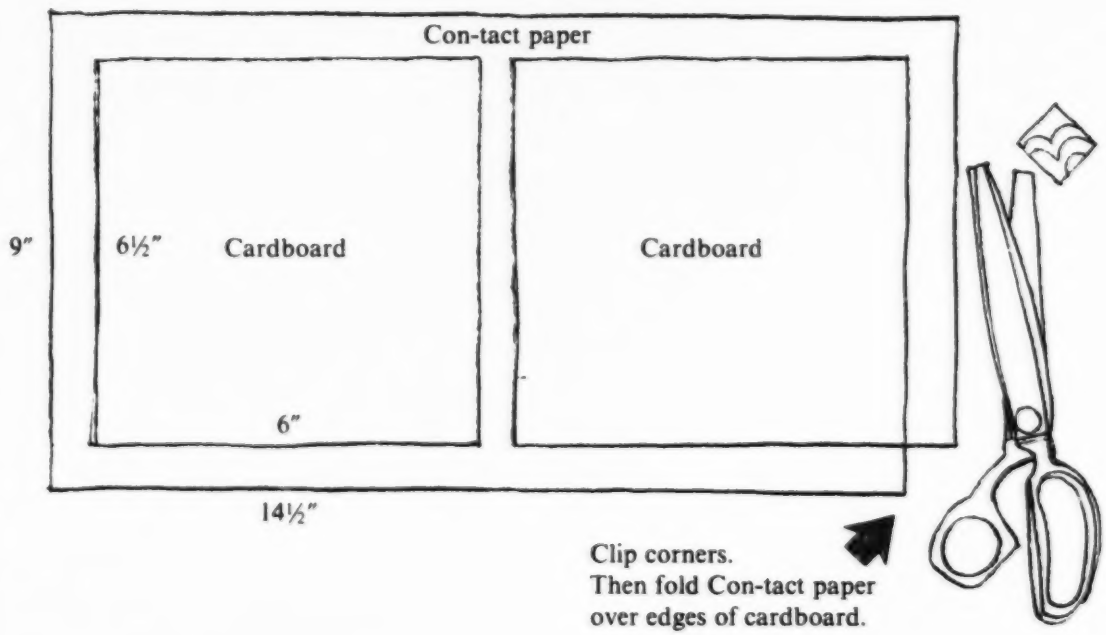
We would like to have the party on , from to in the (where we will have access to comfortable chairs and a big table).

I hope you'll be able to come. I will send a note home next week to remind you.

Warm regards,

Making Con-tact Paper Books

1. Cut paper so it measures 6 × 11 inches. Stack several sheets and fold them in half. Stitch down the middle using a sewing machine—even an old one will do.
2. Cut two pieces of cardboard to measure 6 × 6½ inches.
3. Cut Con-tact paper down the middle of the roll. Take each strip and cut 14½-inch sections. (These measurements will provide maximum use of a roll of Con-tact paper.)
4. Center the two cardboard pieces on the sticky side of the Con-tact paper, leaving ¼ inch between the two pieces so the book will close. Clip the corners of the Con-tact paper so the paper will fold neatly over the edges of the cardboard.
5. Place the stitched pages so that the stitching runs between the two cardboard pieces. Using rubber cement, glue the end pages to the Con-tact-covered cardboard.



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